

ARTICLE # 57-10
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WASHINGTON TIM
18 June 1986

Defector describes Soviet ties to terror

By Bill Gertz
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

A former Czechoslovakian defense official said yesterday that the Soviet Union and its allies have been supporting international terrorist groups since the early 1960s.

Czech Army Gen. Jan Senja, who defected to the United States in 1968, told reporters during a luncheon meeting that Czechoslovakia "absolutely" serves as a base for terrorist training of Palestinian, Latin American and West European terrorist groups.

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viet] satellites, including Czechoslovakia, supported terrorism many, many years back," said Gen. Senja, who said he visited training centers and met with terrorist leaders who requested weapons and explosives.

Groups who have received training and weapons since around 1962 included the German Baader-Meinhoff gang and Italy's Red Brigades, he said. Palestinians, Colombians and other Latin American terrorists also were trained and supplied by Czechoslovakia defense officials, he said.

The Soviet bloc intelligence services try to "control as much as possible" left-wing terrorist groups and try to direct terrorist actions by using weapons supplies as leverage. The ultimate goal is to obtain political advantages from terrorist deeds, he said.

Right-wing terrorists, he said, also were targets of Soviet bloc agents who infiltrated groups in order to gain information about rightist terror plots, he said.

One major training base was located near the Czech town of Doupov, he said, close to the West German border and a large military base.

Soviet and Czech intelligence services supplied explosives, weapons, pistols, and even radio communications equipment, Gen. Senja said.

Gen. Senja was one of the first Soviet bloc defectors to provide the West with details of Soviet support for terrorist groups and the locations of several terrorist training centers in Czechoslovakia.

Other Soviet defectors have confirmed Gen. Senja's information, and CIA Director William Casey said in a speech last year that the Soviet Union continues to train up to 600 terrorists each year.

"They train military leaders, they train professional terrorists [in the use of] ... explosives and they train political leaders," said Gen. Senja, a 14-year Czech Defense Ministry official.

Gen. Senja said he did not know how U.S. intelligence agencies used the information he provided on Czech terrorist training. He said he brought documents and firsthand knowledge of the training camps when he slipped into Italy from Yugoslavia and defected in 1968.

In addition to terrorist training centers in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria provides training for Turkish and Iranian terrorists. The Czechs also provided safe passage for terrorists traveling to the Soviet Union.

Gen. Senja said many Westerners have been fooled into believing terrorists are the Soviet bloc's version of what the West considers "freedom fighters."

"If you look at it from the point of view of freedom and democracy, they are terrorists," Gen. Senja said.